

The Importance of Rest

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The makers of things always include instructions for caring for that item in some sort of manual or paper that comes with the item.

Plants – “Keep the soil evenly moist, so it never dries out completely and never stays overly wet. Sunny plantings generally need more water than shaded plantings, which don't dry out as fast. A 3-inch layer of organic mulch helps retain soil moisture and keep soil temperatures from fluctuating.”



Cars – “Change the oil at 3,000 miles or 6 months, after that, every 5,000 miles or 6 months. Use synthetic oil when able.”

Glasses – “Always rinse your glasses off with water before wiping or cleaning them. NEVER use paper towels, tissue, or napkins to dry your lenses. Hold your frames by gripping the piece that crosses the bridge.”



Our **bodies** also come with helpful instructions for staying fit and healthy, “Men should drink 15.5 (8 oz) cups and women should drink 11.5 cups a day. If you live in a hotter area, exercise frequently, or are pregnant, you should increase your water intake beyond that.”

But, what about our emotional and spiritual needs? Our Creator has given us many guidelines in His scripture about taking care of our emotional and spiritual needs. One of the most critical needs that He clearly values is the need for rest. He created our bodies; therefore, He knows how much rest we need.

Doctors and health experts all agree that we need somewhere around 8 hours of sleep each night. Going for a couple of days without enough sleep can severely affect our ability to think clearly and perform efficiently. In God's Word, He talks about sleep, but most verses always connect “sleeping” with “peace” or “rest.” God knows that our bodies don't just need to sleep, they need to rest. In order for our bodies to fully rest, we must have peace. We have all experienced “sleepless nights” during which our brains keep our bodies from sleeping.



If God has placed you in a position of children's ministry (CM) leadership, He knows that you are mentally able to make the decisions you need to make to lead the ministry. He has given you a sharp mind that more-than-likely thinks deep thoughts and makes plans far ahead of most others in the ministry. The blessing of your fast mind can also be a “curse.” If you aren't able to shut your mind off periodically, you can easily find yourself in a cycle of exhaustion. Your body will soon give out and you will be forced to stay home with a cold, fever, or even dealing with depression.

God has created your body to need rest. His “instruction manual” (the Bible) is filled with instructions about the need for rest. He is so serious about your need for rest that He strongly encourages (demands) that you take a whole day of rest each week. This is a basic requirement for taking care of your body and soul! Here are some scriptures that clearly identify the need for a weekly “Sabbath rest.”



Exodus 16:23

“He said to them, ‘This is what the LORD commanded: Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. So, bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’”

Exodus 23:12

"Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed."

Exodus 34:21

"Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest."

Leviticus 16:31

"It is a sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance."

Leviticus 23:3

"There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; ...it is a Sabbath to the LORD."

God Gives You Rest

God's design for weekly Sabbath rest depends on you making that choice. The scriptures also talk about the mental and emotional rest that God gives you apart from the physical weekly Sabbath rest. This rest is given to you by God. Scriptures say that God gives this rest to those who are "His" or to those who "dwell" with Him. This rest is the direct result of trusting God and obeying His words. Here are some scriptures that talk about rest that God has for you.

**Exodus 33:14**

"The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'"

Joshua 1:13

"Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the LORD, gave you: 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.'"

Joshua 21:44

"The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them."

Psalms 62:1

"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him."

Psalms 91:1

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."

Ministry Is Exhausting

Leading a CM is a work that requires passion, and that passion can exhaust you. The ministry is filled with deeply enjoyable successes and yet it is a never-ending challenge. Many CM leaders find it difficult to leave the job at the office. The ministry can easily "follow you home," which is not healthy, especially if you have a family. Those who lead children's ministries need to discipline themselves to take planned Sabbath rests, and to do all they can to avail themselves of the rest that God can give them.

**Mark 6:31**

"...because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come away with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'"

Hebrews 4:9-11

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.”

As a CM leader, you may work your hardest on the Sabbath. What can be done to establish that “Sabbath rest” if you cannot rest on the Sabbath? Does that mean that you are “exempt” from God’s recommendation to rest a full day during the week? Should you find a way to have another full day of rest apart from the Sabbath? Does that mean that you take one of your days off to satisfy the day of rest? That may be possible. If that’s not possible, you might have to take “mini-Sabbath rests” on other days. The goal is to **plan** for a rest. Here are some ideas for planning “mini-Sabbath” rests:



- **Purposeful Lunches** – Instead of eating at your office, make your lunch beforehand and go to a quiet place (on or off campus) to “come away” with Jesus. Silence your phone and only answer emergency calls or texts.
- **Phone Limitation** – Train your CM team to not call you at home or after work unless it is an emergency. Silence or turn off your phone to enjoy peaceful time with your family and God.
- **Jericho Walks** – Push away from your desk and work to walk around the church facility. As you walk, meditate on scriptures and pray. Thank God for this peaceful moment and after a few minutes return to the work.
- **Quiet Places** – Shut the office door, tell your assistant to hold your calls, silence your cellphone and quiet your mind and body for a few minutes. If the office or your desk reminds you of all the things that need to be done, leave your office and go to an isolated place on the church campus.
- **Early Arrivals** – Arrive to work early and stay in your car. Listen to worship music, read the Bible, pray for the day’s challenges.
- **Personal Appointments** – During times of stress, leave the church campus and drive to a place of rest (coffee shop, lakeside, park, etc.) to enjoy a “quiet time” with God. Tell the office assistant where you are and when you’ll be back. Silence your phone. Make up the time you’re away by either staying longer or taking a shorter lunch.
- **Purposeful Days Off** – Go to a relaxing place and enjoy time with your family and with God. Silence your phone and discipline yourself to not even look at it if it rings or signals that a text has arrived. Do all you can to separate yourself from “work” or “ministry.” Pray for God to give you rest.
- **Worship Withdrawal** – Daily withdrawals into one of your favorite worship songs. While still at your desk, turn off your phone, put on your headphones and withdraw into the song as you worship God. Ask God to turn off your brain and to “lose yourself” into the words and message of the song. After the song is over, be quiet and contemplate Who God is and thank Him for His presence. After a few minutes, turn your phone back on and “return” to work.



Taking “mini-Sabbath rests” should never be viewed as a complete satisfaction for what God describes as a Sabbath rest in His scriptures. They should only be used as “emergency substitutes” until you can devote a full day to resting from your labors. Remember that Jesus did set us free from the “bondage” that some of the Old Testament law established; but God’s recommendations for taking care of your mind, body, and spirit in His “instruction manual” all still apply!